

## **BRAG Wears Many Hats**

The BRAG organization not only provides a wide range of publicly funded services for the three northernmost counties of Utah, it also has been recognized over the years with many different hats or titles. Some of the currently held titles include: economic development district, regional planning agency, regional development organization, regional housing authority, community action agency, area agency on aging, and heritage area.

In the more populated areas of the country, separate organizations would be functioning with these titles. BRAG's ability over the years to serve in many capacities and efficiently manage a wide array of services has saved significant amounts of taxpayer dollars.

### **Regional Development Organizations Have Staying Power**

During the past 40 years, regional organizations have expanded their funding and enhanced their menu of services and programs to meet local, state and federal needs. The ultimate goal remains the same to help local governments in their regions define and meet their common needs through inclusive and coordinated program planning and implementation.

Today, regional development organizations are multi-functional, multi-jurisdictional planning and development agencies that provide assistance to local governments, businesses and nonprofit organizations. Most receive funding for an array of programs from federal, state, local and private sources. Programs vary by region and reflect local priorities.

These regional organizations are created as governmental units or nonprofit public and private institutions. In some states, they are created by state legislation, in others by executive order or local agreements. While a few have taxing authority, most are dependent on federal, state and local grants, contracts and service fees.

In 2000, the NADO Research Foundation conducted a survey of regional development organizations and received information from 292 regions in 48 states. The NADO survey revealed that the typical regional development organization was founded in 1969, serves a population of 220,000 in six counties and 33 cities and towns, has 16 employees and a budget between \$1 million and 1.5 million.

Source: *Economic Development Digest, February/March 2001*